

Dear Committee,

I am writing this letter in regard to the upcoming decision concerning the continuation of the Rhode Island Promise program. As you know, without a change in the current legislation, future high school graduates will not have access to free higher education. I am writing for the future high school graduates and families that believe higher education is not an option – a feeling I once experienced and can sympathize with. Today, I am able to say the Rhode Island Promise Scholarship has allowed me to become a first-generation college graduate. I hope that this letter encourages the continuation of the program so that our emerging leaders will have that same **life-changing** opportunity I did.

I graduated from Middletown High School in 2018 and throughout my senior year all I felt was uncertainty in my future. Growing up, I watched my parents struggle without a college degree and I wanted a different life for myself, which added the pressure of attending college. With little guidance at home, I spent my senior year contemplating where I wanted to attend, which major I should pursue, and whether or not I could even take on the financial burden of college. I used to get anxiety over the thought of choosing a major that I would later change, making me waste money that I certainly didn't have to begin with. On top of that, my mother was about to lose her business, and we would soon have no income, making college seem completely out of reach.

The Rhode Island Promise Scholarship gave me access to opportunities that I originally thought would not be available to me. I graduated with high honors while working two part-time jobs during my time at the Community College of Rhode Island. The employment was necessary for me since I wanted to save money and feel secure enough to continue my education after my first two years. One of my part-time jobs was in the Advising and Counseling Center at the Newport Campus, where I met other ambitious Promise students who shared the same struggles I did. The scholarship allowed me to focus on my General Education studies, which were the easiest credits to transfer, and it allowed me to explore different disciplines that helped me find what I was passionate about.

Although my 2020 commencement was virtual, my mom cried over seeing my name and, more specifically, **our last name**, on the list of graduates. Seeing her tears reminded me of my senior year of high school when she would get emotional during our conversations about college. She talked about how she was losing her business and wanted to help me pay for college, but the funds were simply not available. I knew that these tears were different, and I had made her proud.

The Promise Scholarship changed my life and, in return, I promise to make my community proud. I hope this letter encourages the continuation of the program so future high school graduates can have the same opportunity I did. **These students are our future and I know they will make the most of it.**

Sincerely,  
Jacqueline Lee  
Class of 2020  
Middletown  
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